

VZCZCXRO8156
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHLA RUEHMRE RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHKB #1440 2761324
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 031324Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1372
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNOSC/ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY COOPERATION IN EUROPE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 001440

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: LEADING AZERBAIJANI NEWSPAPERS, REPORTEDLY UNDER
THREAT, CEASE PUBLICATION

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for Reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (SBU) Azerbaijani press reports state that prominent Russian-language news magazine Realny Azerbaijan and its Azerbaijani language sister publication Gundelik Azerbaijan, under pressure from unidentified sources, will cease publication on October 3. Realny Azerbaijan's well-known founder and editor Eynulla Fatullayev, told political analyst Eldar Namazov that unidentified assailants kidnapped his father on September 30. According to Namazov's unconfirmed report, Fatullayev's father was smoking a cigarette in the courtyard of his house when a group of men attacked him, placed a bag over his head and threw him into a waiting car. In Namazov's account, Fatullayev came home immediately and called the kidnappers at a number they left. The kidnappers threatened to kill the father unless Fatullayev shut down his publications, abandoned journalism and left the country. Fatullayev agreed to close the papers immediately after publishing a final edition on October 3. Realny Azerbaijan posted announcement of the sudden closure on its website October 2. Fatullayev's father was then released. He also told Namazov that he intends to leave the country soon. (Fatullayev has kept his mobile phone off since October 2 and we have not been able to reach him.)

¶2. (C) Realny Azerbaijan is the country's most widely read newsmagazine. Often sensationalist, the magazine has repeatedly published "inside" investigations of senior GOAJ officials, in particular singling out Minister of Internal Affairs Ramil Usubov and Prosecutor General Zakir Garalov for their alleged connection to the Haji Mammedov murder and extortion gang within the MIA. Fatullayev was previously the deputy editor of Elmar Huseynov's Monitor magazine, which ceased publication in April 2005 after Huseynov's murder. Civil society commentators allege that Fatullayev has close ties to Minister of Emergency Situations Kameladdin Heydarov which provided Realny Azerbaijan with direct access to sources within the GOAJ. Some civil society commentators believe the pressure on Realny Azerbaijan to be the result of internal infighting between Usubov and Fatullayev's patrons in the government. Namazov alleged that Fatullayev was about to publish information implicating Usubov in the Mammedov gang.

¶3. (C) Comment: We view new reports of pressure exerted on Fatullayev with a great deal of concern, and are investigating the story. If true, this incident is the latest in a series of troubling attacks on journalists that point to a serious erosion in Azerbaijan's media environment. OSCE Special Representative on Freedom of the Media Miklos Haraszti will be in Baku October 9, and we will urge the OSCE, on behalf of the international community, to deliver a tough, focused message on the recent deterioration in media freedoms in Azerbaijan.
DERSE